



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

*Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**

***Combatting the Grey Zone: Examining Chinese Threats to the Maritime Domain***

**June 4, 2024**

The U.S. Coast Guard and its partners are increasingly challenged to secure the maritime domain and enforce an international rules-based order within the Indo-Pacific region.

The region faces a variety of challenges, from rising sea levels as a result of climate change, to massive amounts of trade over vast expanses of sea, to aggressive territorial claims and fishing tactics from malign state actors, including the People's Republic of China. The PRC has used aggressive, "grey zone" tactics to assert territorial claims, exploit fishing stocks, and restrict freedom of movement within the South China Sea.

These "grey zone" tactics do not rise to the level of warfare, but they defy international maritime law and agreements, posing direct challenges to China's neighbors and the global maritime community—including the United States.

Safe and secure maritime travel, trade, fishing, and sovereignty depends upon the good-faith implementation and enforcement of international laws, agreements, and customs. The PRC's activities undermine such efforts, and countering them requires the cooperation and collaboration of the international community to enforce a rules-based order. The U.S. Coast Guard is well-positioned to lead such efforts, in partnership with the State Department, the U.S. Navy, and foreign allies and partners.

The Coast Guard's engagements with counterparts throughout the Indo-Pacific are key to advancing U.S. interests in the region. The Coast Guard engages in valuable exercises, training, and personnel exchanges with partners in the region to bolster maritime law enforcement, port security, search and rescue, disaster response capabilities, and enforcement of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

The Coast Guard has limited resources, however, and the vastness of the Pacific makes it impossible for the service to deploy everywhere it would like to. Congress must invest in the Coast Guard's cutter programs and workforce to maximize its ability to deploy throughout the Indo-Pacific.

I look forward to learning more about how the Coast Guard and its partners can further advance efforts to counter the PRC's aggressive tactics in a way that advances trade and freedom of movement, without increasing the chance of traditional warfare.

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